DATELINE: NEW YORK #138 3-4849 DECEMBER 15, 1976
FRED COOPER

CRAZY FOR PLANTS IN NEW YORK CITY
(VOICED PIECE AND INSERTS AVAILABLE IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: NEW YORK! PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK (AT THIS TIME). TODAY, A REPORT BY FRED COOPER THAT SUGGESTS NEW YORK IS A JUNGLE...OF HOUSEPLANTS. SOME DAYS, AS MANY AS TEN THOUSAND NEW YORKERS PICK UP THEIR TELEPHONES TO DIAL A PLANT. THIS IS WHAT THEY HEAR:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- DIAL-A-PLANT RECORDING...IN FULL TO ESTABLISH... THEN FADE UNDER FOR:

NARR: THAT TINNY VOICE ON THE TELEPHONE BELONGS TO PLANT EXPERT JERRY BAKER. HE HAS WRITTEN TWENTY BOOKS ON PLANT CARE AND HAS BEEN HEARD AND SEEN ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES ON RADIO AND TELEVISION. NOW -- VIA TELEPHONE -- BAKER CAN BE HEARD IN A RECORDED MINUTE OF ADVICE AND PHILOSOPHY DAILY TO EAGER NEW YORK PLANT LOVERS. WHY DOES JERRY BAKER APPEAR DAILY ON THE TELEPHONE TO EXPLAIN THE ART OF HOME GARDENING?:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- JERRY BAKER

"DIAL-A-PLANT WON ITS PLACE BECAUSE IT (HOME-GARDENING) IS THE NUMBER ONE HOBBY. IT'S AN AVOCATION FOR NINETY-TWO PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES, RIGHT NOW. AND THEY WANT TO KNOW. IN NEW YORK, THEY CALL NINE-NINE-NINE-SEVEN-TWO-SEVEN-TWO AND THE PLANT THAT ANSWERS IS ME. AND EVERY DAY IT'S A DIFFERENT ONE (RECORDING) AND I DO THEM IN ABOUT FIFTY-SEVEN SECONDS AND I TRY TO MAKE THEM HUMOROUS AND HOW-TO."

NARR: NOT TOO MANY YEARS AGO, YOU COULD WALK INTO A NEW YORK APARTMENT AND THE ONLY PLANTS YOU MIGHT SEE WOULD BE IN PAINTINGS ON THE WALLS. TODAY, YOU SOMETIMES CAN'T SEE

NARR: (CONT) THE WALLS BECAUSE OF THE FOLIAGE. JERRY BAKER ATTRIBUTES PART OF THE PLANT POPULATION EXPLOSION TO THE ECOLOGY MOVEMENT, PART TO HUMAN NATURE:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- BAKER

"WE WOKE UP ONE DAY AND WE DISCOVERED THAT WE WERE MISSING SOME THINGS THAT WE TOOK FOR GRANTED, AND ONE OF THOSE THINGS WAS THE ENVIRONMENT ITSELF. I THINK WHAT HAS HAPPENED IS THAT PEOPLE WANT TO GET BACK TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN -- WE'RE WORKING OUR WAY BACK IN, AND DOING A PRETTY GOOD JOB. THE MORE PLANTS YOU HAVE IN YOUR HOME, THE BETTER THE LIVING CONDITIONS -- ABSOLUTELY THE BETTER YOUR LIVING CONDITIONS WILL BE. AND BESIDES THAT, I'VE HAD PEOPLE TELL ME THEY (THE PLANTS) ARE COMPANY, THEY'RE SOMETHING TO DO, IT'S A HOBBY, A TIME-OCCUPIER AND PEOPLE DON'T FEEL ALONE ANYMORE, THEY'VE GOT THINGS TO DO. AND THE THING (REWARD) IS THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THINGS GROWING AND YOU HELPED IT! IT'S A REWARDING PASTIME AND SHOULD BE TAKEN THAT WAY."

NARR: ANY KNOWLEDGEABLE APARTMENT GARDENER CAN TELL YOU THERE ARE HOUSEPLANTS THAT DO BETTER IN THE LIVING ROOM OR BEDROOM, PLANTS THAT PREFER THE BALCONY, WINDOW SILL OR ROOF GARDEN, PLANTS FOR A DIM HALLWAY, EVEN PLANTS FOR THE BATHROOM. NOWADAYS, THERE ARE SO MANY PLANTS AVAILABLE THAT JERRY BAKER HAD A HARD TIME NAMING THE MOST POPULAR:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- BAKER

"ALL OVER THE WORLD WE HAVE BETWEEN SEVEN AND NINE HUNDRED PLANTS TO PICK FROM. PROBABLY THE MOST COMMON, OF COURSE IS A RUBBER TREE -- EVERYBODY'S GOT TO HAVE A RUBBER TREE. THE OTHER IS PHILODENDREN, IVY, POTHUS, FITONIA. OF COURSE THE MOST POPULAR PLANT IN ALL OF THE WORLD IS THE AFRICAN VIOLET, SAINT PAULUS. NOW, THE GAMUT RUNS TO JUST EVERYTHING AND I CAN GO INTO HOMES AND FIND PLANTS THAT TEN YEARS AGO YOU WOULDN'T HAVE FOUND -- ABOUT, FIFTEEN YEARS, AGO WE ONLY HAD A SELECTION OF ABOUT FORTY-TWO PLANTS, BUT NOW WE HAVE BOTANISTS AND (PLANT) PATHOLOGISTS WHO DO NOTHING BUT SEARCH THE WORLD OVER FOR PLANTS TO COMMERCIALIZE WITH (SELL)."

NARR: NATURALLY, WITH SUCH A VARIETY OF PLANTS TO CHOOSE FROM, INGENIOUS INDOOR GARDENERS HAVE DEVISED JUST ABOUT AS MANY WAYS TO DISPLAY THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, ELECTRIC LAMPS THAT IMITATE THE SUN FOR APARTMENT GREENERY, HAVE ENABLED PLANTS TO GROW EVEN IN THE HALLWAYS, OPENING UP ENDLESS IDEAS FOR HOME DECORATING. GONE ARE THE DAYS, SAYS JERRY BAKER, OF THE SIMPLE FLOWER BOX ON THE URBAN WINDOW SILL:

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- JERRY BAKER

"THAT WAS THE OLD DEFINITION OF HOUSEPLANTS -- A COLLECTION OF PLANTS ON A WINDOW SILL. NOW, WITH THE CHANGES IN ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING, A NEW AND WONDERFUL WORLD OF INDOOR-OUTDOOR GARDENING OPENS UP. DISPLAYING CAN BE DONE ANYWHERE FROM HANGING BASKETS, TO WALL PLANTERS, TO ACTUALLY GROWING PLANTS RIGHT OUT OF TABLE TOP. AND MUCH FURNITURE NOW IS BEING DESIGNED WITH PLANTS IN MIND. (PEOPLE ARE) ALSO USING COAL BUCKETS AND WATERING CANS AND POP (SOFT DRINK) BOTTLES..."

NARR: CITY PLANTS DO HAVE SOME PROBLEMS, HOWEVER. WHO WATERS THEM WHEN THEIR OWNERS GO OFF FOR A WEEKEND IN THE COUNTRY? PLANTS ALSO SUFFER, AS THEIR OWNERS DO, FROM THE URBAN SCOURGE, SMOG. BUT IN NEW YORK CITY, THERE ARE EVEN SO CALLED "PLANT DOCTORS," HORTICULTURAL EXPERTS WHO WILL MAKE HOUSECALLS TO CARE FOR SICK AND LONELY PLANTS.

THIS MANIA FOR PLANTS SOUNDS A BIT CRAZY TO SOME PEOPLE, BUT NOT TO MANY OF NEW YORK'S PLANT LOVERS. THEY INSIST THAT, TO THEM, PLANTS ARE LIKE PEOPLE.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE, NEW YORK...PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EMENTS IN THE AMERICAN METROPOLIS. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT WEEK (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER DATELINE, NEW YORK.

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